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ABSTRACT

Counselee satisfaction was examined by counselee self-reports on the Counselor Evaluation Inventory. Counselees who saw full-time professional staff members reported a greater degree of satisfaction than those who saw either interns or practicum students. No differences in satisfaction were found in terms of counselee's presenting problems and number of interviews. Scores on the Counselor Evaluation Inventory were related to five categories of counselee expressed satisfaction. The inference was made that of the counselees who saw staff members 86% were satisfied. Of those who saw interns and practicum students 73% and 65% respectively reported they were satisfied. (Author)

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COUNSELEE SATISFACTION AND COUNSELOR TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE

Robert E. Finley

Counselee satisfaction was examined by counselee self-reports on the Counselor Evaluation Inventory. Counselees who saw full-time professional staff members reported a greater degree of satisfaction than those who saw either interns or practicum students. No differences in satisfaction were found in terms of counselee's presenting problems and number of interviews. Scores on the Counselor Evaluation Inventory were related to five categories of counselee expressed satisfaction. The inference was made that of the counselees who saw staff members 86% were satisfied. Of those who saw interns and practicum students 73% and 65% respectively reported they were satisfied.

The difficulty in finding and validating criteria of counseling effectiveness is acknowledged by researchers who have struggled with the problem. Humanistically oriented counselors equate their level of effectiveness to the quality of the relationship established (Rogers, 1957; Paterson, 1967; Truax, 1963). This point of view is challenged by those who demand as a criterion of effectiveness some overt behavioral change (Krumboltz, 1965; Krumboltz and Thoresen, 1969).

Although the quality of the relationship may not be acceptable as a "sufficient" criterion of effectiveness, it does seem logical that a high quality relationship is at least "necessary" to the development of effective communication. Further, clients need to experience some degree of satisfaction from the counseling experience if they are to utilize counseling and recommend it to others. The purpose of this study was to examine counselee satisfaction relative to the level of training and experience of the counselor seen, to the type of problem dealt with in counseling, and to the duration of the counseling relationship.

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Method

The subjects were a sample of counselees seen at the University of Utah Counseling Center during the 1969-70 academic year. Clients that were terminated (N=939) between November 1, 1969 and April 1, 1970 were sent the Counselor Evaluation Inventory (Linden, Stone, and Shertzer, 1965), a 21-item instrument with three sub-scales designed to measure: 1) Counseling Climate, 2) Counselor Comfort, and 3) Counselee Satisfaction. The authors report a test-retest reliability coefficient of .75 for a 100-day interval. A validity coefficient based on practicum grades was .32; both significant at or beyond the .05 level. The purpose of the instrument is to determine counseling effectiveness on the basis of client ratings. Two items, one on the Counseling Climate scale and one on the Counselee Satisfaction scale were not scored because they focused on testing and all of the Ss did not take tests. Of the Ss who were seen two or more times (N-399), 295 returned the questionnaire, a return of 74 per cent. Counselors in the study consisted of the full-time staff of the Counseling Center (N=7), interns working one-half time (N=8), and practicum students (N=16). Client assignment was based on who was on duty when the counselees were available. Interns and staff saw referred or walk-in clients and practicum students saw counselees who were invited to come to the Counseling Center.

For purposes of this study all Ss presenting concerns were classified as: 1) educational-vocational-decision making (N=212) or 2) interpersonal-intrapersonal (N=83). Of the Ss who were seen two or more times professional staff saw 102 (71 returned the questionnaire); interns worked with 191 (149

questionnaires returned); and 106 were seen by practicum students (75 returned questionnaires). Subjects were also classified by number of interviews at the time of termination. Three categories were utilized in making this classification: subjects who came two times (N=143), Ss who came three or four times (N=84) and those who came five or more times (N=68).

The CEI's were scored using a five-point Likert scoring system as suggested by Gabbert, Ivey, and Miller (1967).

Analysis of the data was completed by two-way analysis of variance for unequal cell frequencies using the unweighted means method (Winer, 1962).

Results

To determine if the Ss evaluations of their counseling experience differed by counselor's level of experience and presenting problem a two-way analysis of variance was employed. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

ANOVA of CEI Results Across Type of Presenting Concern and Counselor Level of Training and Experience

Source	SS	df	MS	F
Type of Presenting Problem	197.13	1	197.13	1.47
Level of Training and Experience	1505.35	2	752.67	5.62*
Interaction	70.92	2	35.46	0.26
Error	32550.15	243	133.95	

*Significant beyond the .01 level.

The analysis supports the hypothesis that there is no difference in score on CEI by type of problem presented and rejects the hypothesis of no difference by level of training and experience. (No interaction effects were found.) Further analysis of the level of training and experience variable by means of individual comparisons resulted in a significant difference ($p < .01$) being found between the staff ($\bar{X}=83.83$) and interns ($\bar{X}=79.33$) with an F ratio of 9.36, but no difference between the practicum students ($\bar{X}=77.37$) and the interns ($F=1.44$).

The second hypothesis sought to determine if Ss CEI evaluations were differentiated by number of interviews before termination. Two-way analysis of variance was used again with level of training as the second variable in order to determine if interaction was present. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

ANOVA of CEI Results Across Number of Interviews and Counselor Level of Training and Experience

Source	SS	df	MS	F
Number of Interviews	611.46	2	305.73	2.27
Level of Training and Experience	1614.67	2	807.34	5.99*
Interaction	48.44	4	12.11	0.09
Error	32339.63	240	134.75	

*Significant beyond the .01 level.

The analysis supports the hypothesis that there is no difference in scores on the CEI by number of interviews and again does not support the hypothesis of no difference on the training and experience variable. No interaction effects were found.

In order to further investigate the standard Likert scoring system proposed by Gabbert, Ivey, and Miller, 1967, and to compare it with the system proposed by the authors of the CEI, the data was also analyzed using the weighted scoring system proposed by Linden, Stone, and Shertzer (1965). The analysis of variance indicated the same differences by both methods. For information purposes the significant results are shown in Table 3 for both the standard Likert and the weighted scoring method.

Table 3
Mean Scores by Level of Training and Experience

	Practicum	Interns	Staff
Likert Scoring	77.35	79.33	83.82*
Weighted Scoring	99.08	109.08	103.70*

*Means underlined by a common line do not differ significantly.

Discussion

The results of the study suggest that client satisfaction is related to the level of training and experience attained by counselors, but that client satisfaction is not related to the type of presenting problem or to the number of interviews. These results differ from those reported by Ivey (1962); Johnson (1965); and Gabbert, Ivey, and Miller (1967). These researchers found that clients with personal problems and those who were seen for longer periods of time had more favorable attitudes toward counseling. Brown and Cannaday (1969) reported no relationship between number of interviews and scores on the CEI. In part, this study is a replication of a research project completed by Reed (1970) who found significant differences in satisfaction scores by level

of training and experience using the same three categories as used in this study. No differences were found by type of presenting problem or by number of interviews. In Reed's study, practicum students saw walk-in clients rather than invited clients suggesting that the initial procedure in becoming a client has little effect on satisfaction scores at time of termination. In a study by Kennelly (1970) expectations of counseling satisfaction prior to counseling were not related to client satisfaction as measured by the CEI at termination of counseling.

It may be that the counselor's skill and ability to accurately define client concerns and needs, and to negotiate expectations on the basis of those needs, is a more significant variable related to satisfaction than the presenting problem of the client. Increased satisfaction on the part of counselees with a greater number of interviews may be a function of a selection-retention process based on counselor's individual strengths. In attempts to determine what behaviors account for differences between levels of training and experience, the counselor's effectiveness in dealing with expectations deserves further study.

Little work with the CEI has been directed toward what CEI scores mean in a practical sense. Kennelly (1970) asked CEI respondents to indicate the level of satisfaction with their counseling experience on a five point scale (see Table 5). A sample of the data collected by Kennelly was re-scored (the two items pertaining to testing were not scored) using the Likert scoring method employed in this study, and a one-way analysis of variance was completed to determine if the five levels of expressed satisfaction had differential meaning. The unweighted means approach was used. The results of this analysis are shown in Table 4.

Table 4

ANOVA of CEI Results Across Levels of Client's Expressed Satisfaction

Source	SS	df	MS	F
Expressed Satisfaction	27321.10	4	6830.27	128.78*
Error	10712.85	202	53.03	

*Significant beyond .01 level.

Further examination of the individual means using the Neuman Keuls method indicated that each mean differed from every other mean at or beyond the .01 level of significance. The results of this analysis along with the percentage of CEI respondents to each category of expressed satisfaction by level of training and experience is shown in Table 5.

Table 5

Expressed Satisfaction Categories, CEI Means Scores, and Percentage of Respondents by Level of Training and Experience

Category of Expressed Satisfaction	CEI Scores			Percentage by Level of Training and Experience			
	Mean*	s.d.	N	Staff	Interns	Practicum	Total
Extremely Satisfied--Certain Return	90.17	4.97	41	30.0	14.9	15.7	20.3
Quite Satisfied--Would Consider Return	84.12	5.55	55	42.4	22.4	17.1	27.2
Fairly Satisfied--Might Return	78.27	8.28	51	13.7	31.1	30.0	25.2
Slightly Disappointed--Might Return	60.59	10.39	41	12.1	14.9	32.9	19.8
Thoroughly displeased--Would Not Return	54.80	8.89	15	1.5	16.5	4.3	7.4
Totals			203	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

*Each mean is significantly different from all other means in the column at or beyond the .01 level.

The data shows that for staff members 13.6% of the counselees were "Slightly Disappointed" or "Thoroughly Displeased" with their counseling experience. Percentages of 31.4% for interns and 37.2% for practicum students are evident. Increased training and experience seems to be associated with the ability to form working relationships with a greater variety of people and in such a manner as to have fewer failures. On the other end of the continum 72.4% of client responses pertaining to staff members were in the "Extremely Satisfied" and "Quite Satisfied" categories. The percentages were 37.3% for intern's and 32.8% for practicum student's.

On the average, clients seen by staff members are "Quite Satisfied ($\bar{X}$=83.82) and those seen by interns and practicum students are "Fairly Satisfied" ($\bar{X}$=79.33 and 77.35 respectively). Table 6 presents the percentage of respondents who scored above and below an arbitrary cut-off point halfway between "Fairly Satisfied" and "Slightly Disappointed" categories.

Table 6

Percentage Above and Below the Midpoint Between the "Fairly Satisfied" and "Slightly Disappointed" Categories by Level of Training and Experience

Category	Staff		Interns		Practicum	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Above Cutting Point	61	85.9	108	72.5	40	65.3
Below Cutting Point	10	14.1	41	27.5	35	34.7
Totals	71	100.0	149	100.0	75	100.0

It might be inferred that learning what not to do in order to avoid having dissatisfied clients is more easily acquired than learning what to do. This may

be a function of training procedures. Students in training often comment they are given more "don'ts" than "do's." The inference that training and experience is related to fewer failures is also supported by an inspection of the standard deviations of each distribution. The variance of CEI scores became greater as level of training and experience decreased, staff having a standard deviation of 7.94, interns 11.1, and practicum students 11.6.

There is a need to isolate those behaviors and skills associated with counselors who are effective in forming satisfying relationships with counselees and then develop procedures for transmitting those skills to counselors in preparation. Based on the results of this study it would appear that practicum training is at best minimal preparation for effective practice. This speculation is supported in a study by Pfeifle (1971) who found that the mean CEI score of practicing school counselors with a practicum experience during their training was 102.40 (weighted scoring method). A linear transformation of this mean to the Likert scoring system used in this study produces a mean of approximately 78. Relating this projected mean to the data in Table 5, counselors with a practicum as their maximum level of training are functioning at a level equivalent to "Fairly Satisfied-might return." Pfeifle also found that increased experience per se did not lead to an increase in client's satisfaction rating. It may be that counselor education programs have tried to do too much with too little (i.e., minimal preparation for a difficult and complex job is not sufficient). The preparation may at best have an adequate focus on the technical aspects of preparation and too little emphasis on attitudinal characteristics of effective counselors.

Conclusions

Client satisfaction was found to be associated with increased levels of training and experience. It was not significantly related to the type of presenting problem or to the number of interviews. The full-time staff at the University of Utah Counseling Center functioned at a level equivalent to "Quite Satisfied" on the average, and interns and practicum students functioned at a level equivalent to "Fairly Satisfied." The results of the study provide support for the continued use of the CEI as a method for measuring client satisfaction. It was suggested that the relationship between the counselor's ability to negotiate counseling expectations has some effect on satisfaction. Also, effects of selective retention (i.e., choosing clients you work well with) need to be examined in terms of their relationship to increased satisfaction when clients are seen for longer periods of time and have more interviews. Finally it was suggested that practicum training may be at best minimal terminal training for the preparation of effective counselors.

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